

30 September 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR : Mr. John F. Blake, Deputy Director
for Administration

FROM	:	History Staff
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SUBJECT : CIA History Program

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1. On 23 September 1974, Walter Elder, Chief, CIA History Staff handed me a copy of a memorandum (Attachment 1) which, in effect, closes out the Agency history program on 30 June 1975. I also was encouraged to seek other employment.

2. Although Mr. Elder's memorandum specified that he was not consulted about the decision to terminate the history effort, it suggests (par. 2, Att.1) that the move was dictated by budgetary considerations. Mr. Elder further stated that he was not questioning the decision, but said that I was free to pursue the matter at a higher level, if I so desired. The history program, as you may recall from the extensive contributions made by the Office of Logistics to the "catching up" phase, was a long time developing; but it has been seriously pursued only for the past five years.

3. Three all-source histories of major operations are now in process: [redacted] work on Vietnam; [redacted] story on Iran, and my own piece on the Bay of Pigs. At the initiation of this program we were told that our topics had been approved and were enthusiastically supported by Mr. Colby. These projects were to be the first efforts in a long-term program of all-source, scholarly histories. We were further notified by the

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Chief, CIA History Staff (2 July 1973) that the ultimate objective of our efforts was "to develop for possible public release an accurate unclassified account of certain of CIA's past activities while protecting sources and methods." Considering the sensitivity of the subjects, I do not think any of us had illusions about writing a best seller.

4. As a DDI careerist, as a Ph. D. in Latin American history, and as the senior member of the History Staff, I was very pleased about -- as well as uniquely qualified for -- the Bay of Pigs assignment. In my subsequent contacts with former DDI colleagues, with former Career Trainees, and with DDO personnel, there has been wholesale applause for the DCI's decision to let the historians "tell it like it was."

5. If the history program is abandoned just as it is beginning to focus on some of the most significant and controversial of the Agency's operational episodes, it is highly unlikely that the studies under way can ever be reconstructed. In the case of the Bay of Pigs, I am in the late stages of tracking down elusive documents and source leads; and I have been constantly formulating requirements for personal interviews with many of the principals in the operation. Not only will these sources and requirements be meaningless to any successor historian, many of the key individuals may not be available for questioning. Again, perhaps, you may recall the difficulties encountered as incomplete or unsatisfactory OL histories were passed through a series of authors for completion or revision.

6. Inasmuch as the three of us who are now writing histories probably will be placed in other Agency components, the overall budget will be unaffected. I would like to ask you, therefore, to seriously consider having the DDA (or the DCI?) make provision for necessary funds to complete the overall histories now in process. In the case of the Bay of Pigs, my estimate is that a first draft will be finished in late 1975 or early 1976, with a final draft being ready for publication by the end of 1976 (see Att. 2).

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7. I know that the three contributions will be useful to the Agency in the long run. For example, questions and allegations related to the Bay of Pigs continue to plague the Agency; but as yet, there is no definitive single source to turn to for answers. Moreover since there will be increasing pressure from non-Agency historians -- particularly the revisionists who are in the forefront of the declassification movement -- for access to Agency sensitive materials, it would seem to the Agency's advantage to have the completed all-source histories available as originally planned.

8. An early decision on this request would be appreciated.



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History Staff

Attachments:

1. Memo (as stated)
2. Estimated Time
Table for Completion
of BOP History

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ATTACHMENT 1

23 September 1974

For your information:

On 17 September 1974, I was informed that as of 30 June 1975, the CIA history staff would be reduced to a total of the chief and a secretary. In practical terms, this means two things. First, by 30 June 1975, you will need to find other employment. I shall be glad to help in any way I can. I suggest you get in touch as soon as possible with your parent career service and also with [] DD/A career management officer. Second, we all have an obligation to bring our remaining projects to an orderly conclusion by working against a firm, precise deadline. To that end, I want to sit down with each of you personally to agree on a firm work plan on what can and should be done on a priority basis. Please understand that no one is obliged to stay with the history staff until 30 June 1975, and I shall understand a certain flagging of enthusiasm for your current work.

I was not consulted on this decision, and I shall make no effort to look into it further. Clearly, given the current budgetary constraints, if I were the Director, I would give the history program a low priority.

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WALTER ELDER
Chief, CIA History Staff

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ATTACHMENT 2

ESTIMATED TIME TABLE FOR COMPLETION OF
BAY OF PIGS HISTORY

Fall 1974

Research in presidential libraries
Continuation of research in Agency archives
Preparation of requirements for interviews

Winter 1974-75

Complete archival research
Begin personal interviews

Spring 1975

Complete personal interviews
Organize notes and revise outline
Begin writing

Summer 1975

Continue writing

Fall 1975

Complete first draft

Winter 1975-76

Revision of first draft
Research for revision of first draft

Spring and Summer 1976

Complete revision
Rewrite for final editing

Fall 1976

Final editing
Final typing
Publication

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